Intergroup stereotyping

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Stereotypes correspond to perceivers' beliefs about the attributes, typically personality traits, that define a group. In line with the idea that intergroup stereotyping follows from, and shapes, the relations between groups and their members, recent research efforts on the so-called Big Two, reveal that two dimensions of stereotyping, that is, warmth and competence, organize the way groups are stereotyped by virtue of their relative status and their interdependence and orient downstream emotions and behaviors. Next to stereotype assessment, we devote special attention to the question of stereotype ambivalence as well as to the compensation effect, two phenomena related to the fact that perceivers tend to see groups either high on warmth and low on competence or vice versa. Yet another important theme in contemporary work is that interactions are greatly influenced by the fact that people prove sensitive to stereotypic views that they think others hold about them. A final set of issues concern the degree of accuracy of stereotype content in light of their sensitivity to structural and contextual factors impinging on groups as well as the various functions that stereotypes serve.

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Stereotypes are people's beliefs about the attributes, typically personality traits, that define a group [1[••]]. Early work promoted the idea that stereotypes show a substantial level of inertia, leading generations of scholars to study process rather than content [2]. During the last 50 years, researchers thus investigated how stereotypes are acquired, triggered, used, and changed [3] and these efforts continue today with new tools from social neuroscience [4[••]]. Social perceivers build their stereotypic knowledge from direct observation but also by learning from parents, peers, and the media. Current consensus has it that people first categorize others rather automatically in one of many possible categories, with a premium for gender, race, and age [5]. Under specific conditions of cognitive and motivational resources, the associated stereotypical knowledge is then activated and possibly applied to make sense of the interaction. For the past 15 years, several models tackled the issue of stereotype content anew, uncovering factors that lawfully organize group perceptions and influence emotions and behaviors [6,7[•]]. Intergroup stereotyping is a key element resulting from, as well as shaping, the relations between groups and their members [1[••]]. The present review focuses on stereotyping in a generic sense and, in so doing, rests heavily on the Stereotype Content Model [8], a model that identifies warmth and competence as two orthogonal dimensions along which groups are stereotyped. In particular, this contribution explores the work on ambivalent stereotypes [9] and compensation [10[••]], shedding new light on intergroup stereotyping phenomena.

The Big Two

A host of theoretical and empirical contributions in social, but also in personality, organizational, and cultural psychology point to two dimensions organizing our everyday judgments [11,12[•]]. The SCM, formalized by Fiske and colleagues [13], builds upon earlier work on group perception [14] and proposes that social targets are seen as varying in warmth and competence as they fall in one of the four quadrants formed by the combination of these two dimensions (Figure 1). Because warmth relates to the perceived intent of the group members, it assumes precedence, both in content and speed, in people's representations [15]. Competence reflects others' perceived ability to act upon their intent. Not only do warmth and competence in SCM relate to the communion versus agency distinction [16] but there is also a connection with Osgood's dimensions [17]. The Big Two can be further decomposed: warmth covers friendliness and trustworthiness whereas competence includes skills and assertiveness [11]. For warmth, several efforts show that morality occupies a special place in people's evaluations, especially of their ingroup [18]. For competence, assertiveness is indicative of the motivational underpinning of behavior and preferentially associated with high power targets whereas skills, referring to resources, are more evenly distributed across groups [19].

Evidence for the SCM rests on an impressive wealth of studies, using a wide variety of groups tested in a large number of cultures [20[•],21] and even relying on the neural signature of stereotypical warmth and competence. For instance, Harris and Fiske [22[•]] presented their participants with members of various groups from each of four SCM quadrants and checked whether the medial

Figure 1
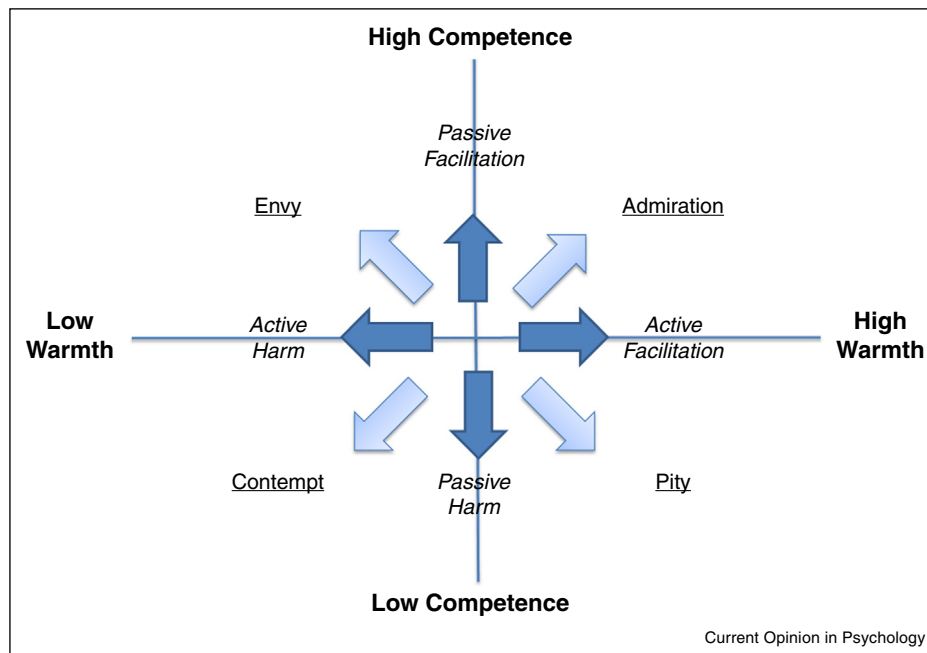
The two dimensions of warmth and competence as proposed by the SCM along with their associated emotional and behavioral responses according to the Bias Map model.

prefrontal cortex (mPFC), the neural headquarters of social cognition, came online [23]. Confirming that low warmth low competence outgroups would be dehumanized, the mPFC failed to activate in presence of such groups as homeless or drug-addicts.

The wide range of tools and data used to study the SCM provides a solid basis for its validity. This two-dimensional space constitutes a marked progress relative to earlier unidimensional conceptions in which stereotypes were hardly differentiated from valence/prejudice. Capitalizing on the insights and efforts of the work on ambivalent sexism [9], one clear innovation of SCM is to bring researchers' attention to the existence of ambivalent stereotypes [24••] (see also Fiske, Dupree, Nicolas, & Swencionis, in this issue).

Assessment
Measuring stereotypes in the context of the SCM follows the steps of a long tradition [25] whereby respondents are asked to rate social targets on a series of scales. Warmth is evaluated with such traits as likeable, sociable, and sincere, whereas competence relies on traits such as capable, skilled, and motivated. In some cases, more unobtrusive techniques have been used, such as Multidimensional Scaling, as a means to first uncover the standing of various groups with respect to each other. The resulting factors are then regressed on independent judgments of the same groups on both structural aspects and stereotypical judgments (see

next sections). Direct association measures, such as the lexical decision task, or cognitive interference measures, such as the Stroop Task or the Implicit Association Task, are increasingly used to uncover spontaneous activation and application of stereotypes upon confrontation with a group and to avoid intrusion of social desirability concerns. Respondents are then asked to identify warmth and competence words that either are or are not primed with the critical category [26,27] or complete two IAT's, associating targets with competence on one IAT and with warmth on the other [28,29].

Antecedents and consequences
The SCM posits that groups' interdependence shapes perceived warmth while status differences predict perceived competence. Specifically, people ask questions such as 'Are we competing? Are we in danger of being exploited or cheated of resources?' to address a target group's warmth. And questions such as 'Do they possess the skills, the will, and the resources to enact their intentions?' allow gauging its competence. Empirical evidence confirms that the correlation between status and competence is strong and emerges in all cultures whereas the relations between competition/cooperation and warmth are often found but less robust. Across 25 nations, only 18 of 36 competition-warmth correlations proved significant [20•]. Broadening the definition of competition and cooperation by incorporating symbolic threat in addition to realistic threat aspects traditionally

measured by SCM greatly improves this link [30[•]]. Such findings should encourage researchers to further connect the SCM with the work on Integrated Threat Theory [31] and with a socio-evolutionary perspective on intergroup emotions [32].

The SCM also spells out how stereotypes in each of four quadrants further translate into emotions and discriminatory behaviors. According to the BIAS Map Model [33[••]], the target's warmth fuels active behaviors on the part of the perceiver whereas competence feeds passive behaviors (Figure 1). As a result, the high warmth — high competence quadrant, where ingroups typically reside, triggers admiration and pride, along with active helping and passive associating. Low warmth — low competence, found for homeless or migrants, fosters disgust and contempt, leading to active hurting and passive neglect. High warmth — low competence groups, such as elderly and disabled people, evoke sympathy and pity, conducive to active help but passive neglect. Finally, the low warmth–high competence groups, mostly outgroups in power position, elicit envy and jealousy, provoking either active harm or passive association. For these two, the relative salience of warmth versus competence would seem to orient active versus passive behaviors.

The threat-to-stereotype-to-emotion-to-behavior sequence doves nicely with the causal flow postulated in the work on intergroup emotions (see also Smith & Mackie, this issue) and in the research on group-based emotions [34[•]]. One added value of the work on group-based emotions is that it affords a key role to people's subjectively salient group membership when appraising the environment [35], thereby strongly emphasizing the contextual fluidity of stereotypes. As one would expect, the search for coherence among the components of the proposed causal chain (threat, stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination) may encourage perceivers to walk their way backwards. As a matter of fact, when informed about a group's competence, people readily infer its status [36]. Perceivers also rely on experienced affect to assume (lack of) warmth [37]) and to construe threat [38].

Ambivalence and compensation: the dividends and costs of complementing/ complimenting

Compensation [10[••]] concerns the propensity to consider that a social target who is more competent (warm) than another target is also less warm (competent) [12[•],39[••]]. Going beyond ambivalent stereotypes, compensation stresses the key fact that what is thought about one group is related to the representation of the other. Importantly, compensation emerges only for the two fundamental dimensions [40] and has been obtained with both rating scales and spontaneous measures and for both real and minimal groups [12[•]]. Like observers, group members also show compensation but are often tempted to maximize

their ingroup's strength. Compensation is more likely to emerge when people see the status differential between the groups as substantial but also as stable, legitimate, and devoid of conflict [41]. More than a decade of research reveals that a stronger compensatory reaction emerges when manipulating competence rather than warmth, a pattern seemingly related to the greater sensitivity of judgments of competence to reality constraints.

Some studies find a compensation pattern and ambivalent stereotypes on both explicit and implicit measures [28] but not all [27]. In fact, next to univalent positive implicit stereotypes of the ingroup, signaling ethnocentrism [28], univalent negative implicit views of stigmatized groups [26] also emerge, suggesting desirability concerns at work at the explicit level. As it happens, high competence groups readily credit low competence groups with higher warmth, a typical 'noblesse oblige' gesture, while the latter are quick to see warmth as their strength, a classic social creativity strategy [42]. Clearly, both groups contribute to a compensatory view of the situation but for different reasons, especially given the fact that competence remains more sensitive to reality constraints than warmth and is therefore less easy to move around. It is no surprise that compensation and justification of stable social hierarchies go hand in hand [43].

Compensation also shapes individual behaviors as people try to convey information about their own and other groups in ways that best serve their interest and their image. For instance, people often omit mentioning the negative information about a social target and focus instead on the positive aspects, counting on the fact that people will fill in the gap, a stereotype-by-omission strategy that promotes innuendo and stereotype stagnation [25,44]. The role of compensation on several facets of self-presentation is currently at the heart of intensive research [45[•]].

Perceivers' general reluctance to mention negative stereotypes and the propensity of members of high-status groups to indulge into noblesse oblige materializes the popular belief that one should try and promote positive views about others. Still, positive stereotypes come with a cost [46]. While positive stereotypes may well alleviate the stigmatization associated with group membership, improving other people's impression of the group, and boosting performance of its members in the stereotyped domain, they are also pernicious in that they are hardly recognized as a biased and potentially harmful form of judgment. Positive stereotypes tend to depersonalize the targets and distract them from focusing on achievement and opportunities that matter. In a nutshell, they often serve the perpetuation of inequality.

Meta-stereotypes

As the impact of self-presentation concerns on compensation reveals, people are far from indifferent to what

others think about them. In fact, a most intriguing aspect of intergroup stereotyping concerns the impact of meta-stereotypes, that is, the views that the members of a given group believe exist about them in the eyes of another group's members [47**]. Meta-stereotypes may constrain the course of intergroup relations as surely if not more so than stereotypes. In general, people expect outgroups to hold rather negative views about their ingroup, leading to adverse consequences when they are activated, as the work on stereotype threat shows [48*] (see also Lewis & Sekaquaptwa, this issue). Additional consequences are increased intergroup anxiety, legitimation of violence and aggression toward the outgroup, negative feelings about intergroup interaction and negative attitudes and less favorable evaluations of outgroup members. As it were, meta-stereotypic expectations are often more negative than what is actually the case, and this paves the way for a series of misunderstandings [49]. Where conflicts are less severe, meta-stereotypes may embrace positive as well as negative beliefs [50].

From essentialism to accuracy

Stereotypes offer a means to talk about observed behaviors by invoking inherent characteristics of the targets, in line with the rich work on the fundamental attribution error. They serve to essentialize those behaviors that often derive from the position people occupy in a given social arrangement [51]. A similar idea underlies social role theory although this line of work long focused on gender stereotypes and has only recently been extended to other stereotypes [52]. Whereas SCM considers that information about the social structure in which groups are embedded, namely status and interdependence, shapes stereotypes, SRT would argue that the specific social roles occupied by social groups, and specifically those roles in which groups are overrepresented, are the more direct precursors of perceivers' stereotypic beliefs. Interestingly, these efforts emphasize the fact that stereotypes are moderately to highly accurate reflections of the attributes encountered in a given group.

In fact, ever since the early definition of stereotypes as 'pictures in the head', the issue of accuracy has stirred a fervent debate, with only few researchers offering empirical progress or questioning the dominant view that stereotypes are necessarily wrong [53]. Although most traits considered in contemporary work do not lend themselves to strict accuracy checks, the fact that structural aspects constrain stereotype content sends a reassuring message as to the possible fit between beliefs and reality. Still, largely ignored in this debate is the crucial issue of fluidity: observers and researchers alike overlook the extent to which stereotypes depend on the subjectively relevant comparison as well as the variability of the intergroup relations under scrutiny. This idea is at the heart of self-categorization theory [54] whereby comparative and normative fit combine to shape the perception of groups in presence. The same group can be seen as warmer and less competent or colder and more competent as a function of which comparison group, and thus which structural arrangement, is envisioned [55]. In other words, groups are not fixed in the space defined by the two fundamental dimensions. Yet, the more encompassing the groups and enduring the relations the more inertia characterizes people's stereotypic views. This is nicely illustrated by cross-cultural work where researchers seldom acknowledge dealing with stereotypes when describing eastern and western cultures. But stereotypes do change and the more variable structural aspect is certainly the cooperation/competition with the target, making warmth the more responsive and indeed versatile of the two dimensions. As groups evolve within society on matters of relative status and power, stereotypes mutate accordingly [29].

Functions

Contemporary findings on the SCM, on ambivalent stereotypes, and on compensation are in full accordance with the long-identified functions of stereotypes [56]. First, stereotypes serve a knowledge function as they provide a means to understand and explain the social world. The Big Two translate the existing state of affairs in more cognitively manageable terms, offer the necessary background toward consistent emotional reactions, and pave the way for the subjectively relevant behaviors. The justification and rationalization function, sometimes called ego-defensive at the individual level, is well-served by the tendency to locate the ingroup in the high competence/high warmth quadrant of the space. And even when a more 'restricted' intergroup comparison is considered, the possibility to fall back on ambivalent/compensatory representations allows securing positive feeling with respect to self-worth and group-worth. Last but not least, the social adjustment function resonates with the fact that people prove sensitive to normative concerns when it comes to experiencing and, of course, expressing their stereotypes. It has also been suggested that the more reality-based competence dimension primarily serves the knowledge/explanation function whereas the more subjective warmth dimension helps with the justification/rationalization function. Moreover, the fact that compensation recedes when conflict or feelings of illegitimacy enter the picture signals the key role of stereotypes as weapons of social mobilization.

Conclusions

In less than a decade, research on intergroup stereotyping has changed gears substantially. While continuing their quest with respect to the processes involved, researchers have reopened a rich debate with respect to content. Current research aims at integrating a variety of efforts, spanning the whole range of intergroup phenomena. Because stereotypes are at the crossroads of a variety of

important facets of group behavior, they are and will continue to be a key topic for research.

Conflict of interest statement
Nothing declared.

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- of special interest
- of outstanding interest

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